A traditional vacation in “one of the most beautiful spots on earth”

High alpine landscapes, primeval valleys, unblemished nature, picturesque villages, deeply seated traditions and world-class cultural highlights: this is what Berchtesgadener Land has to offer. Long ago Alexander von Humboldt referred to this area as “one of the most beautiful spots on earth” thanks to its unique traits, as well as its diversity. Whereas the Rupertiwinkl in the north is considered to be a paradise for families thanks to its rolling green hills and its attractive lakes, the towns of Bad Reichenhall and Bayerisch Gmain have built a reputation as health and spa resorts. The southern region of the Berchtesgadener Land offers world-famous historic and natural attractions such as the ‘Eagle’s Nest’ and Lake Königssee. The National Park, dominated by the 2,713m Mount Watzmann – Germany’s second-highest peak – is an irresistible destination to those who enjoy walks in the grandeur and solitude of the mountains and is a treat to experienced mountaineers.

Königssee: More than one century of electric boat traffic

Considered to be one of the most beautiful mountain lakes in the Alps, Königssee’s crystal clear waters lie at the foot of majestic peaks such as the Jenner, the Watzmann and the Steinernes Meer. Surrounded by sheer rocky cliffs, the lake reaches depths of some 200 meters, resembling a fjord in Berchtesgaden National Park. An electric-powered boat service transports visitors to St Bartholomew Peninsula with its world-famous church, one of the most photographed sights on the planet. A short stop during the cruise is a must: the boat’s captain shows off his musical skill on the Flugelhorn at the famed ‘echo wall’.

2009, Königssee was celebrating a jubilee year. Exactly 100 years ago, the traditional rowboat fleet was replaced by ships propelled by silent electric motors. This was especially important to Prince Regent Luitpold as he wanted to avoid the red deer from being scared away from his favourite hunting grounds by the noise of steamboats.

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### Amid golden eagles and marmots in Berchtesgaden National Park

No less than twelve golden eagle pairs have made their home here, as well as dozens of stags, does and marmots. Covering an area of 210 km² at the foot of Mount Watzmann (2,713m) Berchtesgaden National Park, the only one in the German Alps, has allowed the flora and fauna to develop undisturbed here since 1978. Walkers can enjoy unspoiled nature from the convenience of a 230km network of hiking trails as well as refreshments in any of 25 mountain huts, 17 of which offer overnight accommodations. Apart from recreation and nature protection, the National Park’s main functions include research and environmental education. If offers excursions ranging from donkey rides to a high-mountain lake, a hike into the golden eagles’ realm and guided outings with a park ranger. Information is provided at the National Park Haus, as well as at five other information centres. [www.nationalpark-berchtesgaden.de](http://www.nationalpark-berchtesgaden.de)

### Bad Reichenhall - on the salt trail

Bad Reichenhall, with more than 850 years of existence, brings alive the history of salt with which it is intrinsically associated. This is a history that goes back some 4000 years to the time when Bad Reichenhall’s brine springs were first used for the extraction of salt. The centuries are scarred by bitter wars waged over this so-called ‘white gold’. Thanks to its monopoly over the precious mineral, Bad Reichenhall became immensely rich in the 12th century - a kind of ‘Dubai of the Middle Ages’ – until the Archbishop of Salzburg razed the town. Though salt has been extracted from Bad Reichenhall’s brine springs since ancient times, it wasn’t until the 16th c. that salt rock was mined in nearby Berchtesgaden. Salt’s virtues as a preserving, as well as a healing agent, were greatly promoted by King Maximilian II who sojourned in Bad Reichenhall in 1848. He initiated the town’s recognition as an official Bavarian State spa, thus transforming the township into a high society resort. Even today, around 18,000 people live here in the midst of famous spa facilities, the royal cure-takers’ park, the gambling casino and the Philharmonic Orchestra that all contribute to lending Bad Reichenhall a big town flair at the foot of intact alpine surroundings.

**Salty Highlights:** A stroll through the underground old salt works’ tunnel system ([www.alte-saline-bad-reichenhall.de](http://www.alte-saline-bad-reichenhall.de)), the Salt Time Journey in the adventure salt mines of Berchtesgaden ([www.salzzeitreise.de](http://www.salzzeitreise.de)), a trip to Europe’s one and only curative salt gallery ([www.salzheilstollen.com](http://www.salzheilstollen.com)), wellness facilities at the Rupertus Therme ([www.rupertustherme](http://www.rupertustherme)) and in the Watzmann Therme ([www.watzmanntherme.de](http://www.watzmanntherme.de)).
| Where the German Alps' only pearls shine | There are 24 “Alpine Pearls” in the alpine regions. But in Germany, thanks to their pledge to high quality for tourism, soft mobility, sustainability and environmental protection, Berchtesgaden and Bad Reichenhall are the only places that match up to the strict criteria set by the marketing cooperative. Vacationers in the Berchtesgadener Land can leave their car at home without worrying about getting around. Both Berchtesgaden and Bad Reichenhall guarantee easy access for travellers, as well as environmentally-friendly transportation within the region. Bio-diesel busses in Bad Reichenhall and local services in Berchtesgaden provide overnight visitors with free transportation thanks to which they can reach many interesting or attractive destinations. In addition there is a circle route bus service for hikers and another for visitors to mountain pastures, also making stops in the National Park. |
| Easy biking thanks to ‘electric wheels’ | Sometimes a bicycle tour can prove to be more tiring than one thought. This is especially true for those who are accustomed to flat land and who find they get out of breath more quickly in the mountains. Berchtesgadener Land has seen to it that no-one need overstrain themselves. Hiring a Movelo allows the rider to switch on the eco-friendly electric motor when the trail becomes too steep. The motor doesn’t free one from pedalling altogether, but it certainly makes it easier on the legs. Though each Movelo’s stored energy is enough to cover between 30 and 60 kilometres, depending on the terrain, the bike’s battery can be recharged at numerous stations free of charge. This is Europe’s first official Movelo region and it offers a nice selection of suggested biking routes outlined on a special map. Hiring a Movelo starts at as little as EUR 6.00 per half-day. |
| World-class classics: Bad Reichenhall Philharmonic Orchestra | Long ago, the elite and high society cure-takers wished to be entertained. For that reason Bad Reichenhall’s Philharmonic Orchestra was already founded 140 years ago. Ensuring world-class quality, the orchestra entertains music-lovers in this privileged alpine community of 18,000 inhabitants. Some 40,000 spectators attend the summer concerts at the Kurpark and about 15,000 visitors attend the open air event at Lake Thumsee that features fireworks, as well. Among the musical offers, the AlpenKlassic ensemble will be starring from October 20th till 30th. |
### The Eagle’s Nest (Kehlsteinhaus) and Obersalzberg

Easily accessible by a special bus service, the so-called Eagle’s Nest (Kehlsteinhaus) perches at 1,834m (6,017ft), offering a spectacular panorama over the regions of Berchtesgaden and Salzburg. Surrounded by craggy peaks, one can take a one-hour hike on a circular trail offering stunning viewpoints. Those eager to hike even more can reach Kehlsteinhaus on foot from Ofneralm (2hrs) or via the “Panoramaweg” in 3 hours. It was Martin Bormann who presented the building to Adolf Hitler on the occasion of his 50th birthday. Today this historic monument is open from around mid-May through October - weather and road safety permitting. The Documentation Centre at Obersalzberg is open year-round with a fascinating and educational focus on the changes brought about by the National Socialist dictatorship that from 1933 on, transformed Obersalzberg from Hitler’s vacation home to a second seat of power to Berlin. Historical and educational tours are offered by [www.eagles-nest-historical-tours.com](http://www.eagles-nest-historical-tours.com)

### Spectacular return from the pastures: The cows take a boat ride

Following the example set by King Maximilian II of Bavaria who chose to spend his holidays in the Berchtsgadener Land, high society soon discovered the merits of Germany’s south-easternmost tip. They were rowed across Lake Königssee in flat wooden boats called *Landauer* until, exactly one hundred years ago, in 1909, the first electric powered boat was put into operation. In the spring, the cows are ferried across the 8km (5mile) long lake to their summer pastures at Saletalm and Fischunkelalm. Upon their return to their barns on the mainland in the autumn, the cows are beautifully decorated with colourful headdresses (provided there have been no accidents or losses during the summer months). Many visitors come especially to watch and even accompany this unusual convoy as the herds make their way along roads and through villages to their winter quarters.

### Handicrafts carry on traditions: Old boxes and naked women

For centuries Berchtesgaden’s wooden handicraft was considered to be a ‘labour of necessity’ as farmers were obliged to learn this trade for additional income. Today the art has developed into a tradition unique to Berchtesgadener Land and makes for ideal gifts and souvenirs. Formerly children all over Europe played with the rattles, horse-shaped whistles and ‘chicken coop’ toys shaped and decorated by the locals with care. Today these traditional “Berchtesgadener wares” are often used to decorate the Christmas tree! Franz Aschauer makes all kinds of wooden toys and offers an astounding selection of spinning tops. Sepp Hözl is a guild master who still makes the traditional *Spanschachtel* (a box made of spruce wood shavings) whereas Monika Baumgartner is specialized in painting them. Customers at her shop may have to spend up to EUR 700 for one of these authentic Berchtesgaden works of art. While Monika Baumgartner ponders her next decorative design, young people are learning a trade at the technical college for woodcarving and carpentry. Not only making classic figures such as those placed in Nativity scenes but other subjects, including naked women are part of their training. These future artists and artisans know that, apart from the demand for cheap industrially made trinkets, there is always a demand for authentic and imaginative woodcarvings.
**Königssee's sole fisherman and his speciality**

His name is Thomas Amort and, at 43 years of age, he’s the captain of his boat… a small fishing boat, that is. For three generations Thomas’s family have held the exclusive fishing rights for Lake Königssee. The Amort family is particular proud of their “Schwarzreiter” a small type of char found only in Königssee. Here in the fishery at St Bartholomew they are smoked over beech wood according to an old traditional custom and sold on the premises only between August 24th and Christmas. Even the Bavarian Royal Family enjoyed this specialty and used to order it for their formal banquets. Apart from char, the Amorts also pull in trout, pike and perch from Germany’s cleanest lake. In 1987 their net drew in a 1.27m (4.5ft) long trout weighing 27.5kg (60lbs). Today it can be viewed in a showcase at St Bartholomew’s restaurant.

**Where Mozart balls roll and Mt Watzmann melts in the mouth**

Whether Mt Watzmann in Berchtesgaden or Mt Zugpitzte in Garmisch (partly shared with Austria) is Germany’s highest mountain remains a topic of discussion. In any case, the Watzmann can be conquered by one’s mouth in the form of a delicious chocolate. Dark chocolate below, ‘snow cap’ white chocolate above, this temptation is filled with soft nougat inside. Created by Wolfgang Spießberger from Berchtesgaden, the Watzmann praline is a double sized treat, reflecting the size of the mountain after which it was modelled. [www.watzmannpraline.de](http://www.watzmannpraline.de)

Those with a sweet tooth will be delighted to explore Café Reber in Bad Reichenhall. Their torts and cakes or legendary and the traditional coffeehouse atmosphere in the resort’s pedestrian zone is memorable. The Reber Family has been producing the famed chocolate Mozartkugeln (Mozart balls) since 1840 and can now proudly boast a production of some 500,000 pieces per year [www.reber-spezialitaeten.de](http://www.reber-spezialitaeten.de)

**A visit to the ‘Böller’ maker Wolfgang Pfnür in Berchtesgaden**

In no other place in Germany is the old custom of noise-making upheld with such tradition as in the Berchtesgadener Land. Throughout the year, any excuse seems to be found in order to draw attention. For some, it the Goaßlschnalzen, an artful mastery of whip-cracking, practised by children already at a young age and displayed in perfect rhythm on festive occasions. To others, it’s the centuries-old Böllerschießen (shooting a saluting gun) for weddings and on numerous religious fest days. Europe’s sole ‘Böller’ maker is Wolfgang Pfnür whose workshop sits below the idyllic and famed church at Maria Gern. This pilgrimage shrine is known for its crescent moon Madonna who is clothed in 24 different outfits throughout the religious year. This is where Wolfgang and his father ensure a good supply of muzzle-loading saluting guns to the local population. On request, the Böllermacher is quite willing to be interviewed and is happy to explain the fascinating details of his trade and the traditions with which it is linked. [www.boeller-pfnuer.de](http://www.boeller-pfnuer.de)
| The ‘spirit’ of tradition: Germany's old gentian distillery | Ever since 1602, Grassl's renowned 'mountain gentian' has been distilled in Berchtesgaden. Over the years, however, the family has extended its product range to around 30 various herbal or fruit liqueurs. Free tasting is offered to groups and individual visitors. The tours are of particular interest as they offer insight into this centuries-old distillation tradition. A distilling museum is housed in a nearby mountain hut, transferred to the site piece by piece. Here one can sample the clear house brandy made of gentian roots, as well as Berchtesgaden specialties, such as cheese from local high mountain pastures. [www.grassl.com](http://www.grassl.com)
As Grassl's distilling rights are a long-established tradition, Berchtesgaden National Park gave the company the exceptional authorization to carry on its activities in the National Park area: digging up gentian plant roots and distilling on location at mountain huts near Funtensee and Wasseralm. The Priessberg distilling hut is of particular interest and is located a one-and-a-half-hour's hike from the Jenner cable-car's halfway station. |
| Cool ideas on hot days: Ice excursions and gorge adventures | For those who enjoy fridge temperatures in the heat of summer, the Schellenberger ice caves are just the right destination. The trail leading to the caves, however, is sure to help work up a sweat: located a good 1000m (3,300 ft) higher in elevation than the trailhead near Marktschellenberg, the caves are the reward of a 3-hour hike up Mt Untersberg. The long haul can be broken before the top by a rest and refreshments at Toni-Lenz-Hütte. Germany’s largest accessible ice caves feature 30m (100ft) thick ice formations that are over 3,000 years old and are open from Whitsuntide (Pentecost) till the end of October.
Or how about an excursion to a glacier? The trail leading up to the Blaueisgletscher, the northernmost glacier in the Alps, starts at the Seeklause parking lot near Lake Hintersee. A two to three hour hike will be rewarded by the eternal ice on Mt Hochkalter’s north face, as well as by refreshments at the Blaueishütte perched up at 1680m above sea-level. To stay cool a little longer, you could also spend the night in one of the hut’s guestrooms.
Other cool destinations on a hot day are the various gorges of the Berchtesgadener Land. Among Bavaria’s most impressive canyons is the Almbachklamm near Marktschellenberg. At the foot of the gorge you will find Germany’s oldest marble ball mill that, ever since 1683, has been harnessing the power of water to grind chunks of marble down to perfectly smooth round balls. Recommended only in perfectly dry weather, the Weissbachschlucht is an interesting gorge to explore as you cross bridges and duck under rock overhangs from Weissbach to Schneizlreuth. In Bayerisch Gmain the Speikschlucht gorge features a roaring waterfall at the valley’s end. |
| Something for the hot-blooded: A swim in Lake Funtensee | Anyone for a dip in Lake Funtensee? It is recognized as Germany’s coldest spot. Every winter the coldest temperatures are recorded here – at Christmas in 2001 a record-breaking minus 45.9 degrees Celsius made headlines. The reason for this phenomenon is its location in a geological hollow. Since cold air is heavier than warm air, the cold flows down the surrounding slopes and concentrates itself in the bowl. This only happens when snow covers the area and cool air can easily slide down over the even snowy surface. In summer Funtensee is no colder than similar mountain lakes and makes for a refreshing opportunity to cool blistered feet on a hot day. At an elevation of 1638m (about 5,400ft), Funtensee’s water temperature in summer varies between 10 and 12 degrees Celsius. |
| Mountains of fun for families and summer highlights for kids | Among the great adventures for families with kids, a hike in the National Park to view eagles, chamois and marmots makes for a memorable and educational experience. In addition there are cable-cars to speed visitors to giddy heights and exciting salt mines deep down under the mountain complete with thrilling slides and a mysterious raft ride across a mirror lake. Or how about a day at the Watzmann Therme with its state-of-the-art 80m long ‘Black Hole’ slide or a dip in one of Berchtesgadener Land’s warmer lakes? Kids absolutely love the natural swimming pool at Aschauerweiher, Germany’s largest, with a water surface of 4,200 sq m. Germany’s south-eastern tip truly offers ‘mountains of family fun’, the best of which is described in a German language map entitled *Richtig fein. Für Groß und Klein*. Kids can also pick up the free *WatzmannKinder-Erlebnispass* and collect points at various stations so as to qualify for rewards. It’s a well-known fact that adventures make kids hungry, which is why many restaurants offer a family dish: for only 29 Euro parents and two children can eat their fill – drinks included! |
| A must-see museum: The Lokwelt in Freilassing | At Freilassing’s Lokwelt visitors can explore the history of locomotives, carriages and tracks. The museum’s building alone is well worth the journey: this renovated circular engine shed, complete with turntable, is indeed the star of the museum. It features rare pieces on its 17 tracks, such as a steam-engine locomotive from 1874 and a Bavarian express train locomotive. The separate workshop area invites guests to watch rail experts renovate veteran gems. [www.lokwelt.freilassing.de](http://www.lokwelt.freilassing.de) |
### Adventures with an adrenaline guarantee: Rafting, canyoning, paragliding and more

For real thrills and spills the Berchtesgadener Land offers a great number of outdoor adventure activities. The Saalach River is perfect for white-water rafting, thanks to its rapids, rolls and waves that constantly present the crew with new challenges. Those who are into ‘canyoning’ will be delighted here with a huge choice of venues ranging from beginner’s gorges suitable for kids as young as seven to challenging routes that take them abseiling down thundering waterfalls and jumping some five meters (17ft) from one pool down to the next.

Though it might appear to be more leisurely at first, a ride on a Segway with the company Mountain Move can also take you to the limits. This space-age two-wheeled scooter runs on an electric motor and can be even more fun off-road as well, provided one has mastered one’s balance!

It’s also a matter of balance in the dizzy heights of a high rope course where participants learn to push themselves to new limits. Or how about trying out paragliding? A tandem ride from Mt Jenner down into the valley makes one feel like a soaring bird while enjoying spectacular views.

### With or without a GPS device: Hiking in a world of natural wonders

Since 2005 an unusual stone formation called *Steinerne Agnes* has been officially recognized as one of Bavaria’s most attractive geotopes. Located in the Lattengebirge range not far from Mt Predigtstuhl it looks like a giant mushroom, shooting 13m (43ft) into the air. To visit this bizarre sight one should allow about four and a half hours round trip on a hike that takes one some 700m (2,300ft) higher in elevation.

The *Steinerne Agnes* is only one of the innumerable natural attractions in the Berchtesgadener Land that counts some odd sites with names such as ‘Dead Man’, ‘Devil’s Hole’ or ‘Sleeping Witch’ which are enough to awaken anyone’s curiosity. Whether one wanders over flowering meadows and across thunderous streams or if one climbs through gorges and canyons or up to lakes and peaks – one may find it useful to plan one’s hikes with a GPS device that can be rented here free of charge.

### Where leisure cyclists and mountain-bikers find their favourite trails

The Rupertiwinkl region seems to have been created specially for family bike tours. The gentle rolling hills of its landscape are dotted with idyllic lakes with an open invitation to a cooling dip. However, the further south one advances into Berchtesgadener Land, the steeper it becomes. Those wishing to circumvent Mt Hoher Göll will be challenged by a 2,000m (6,600ft) difference in elevation over a distance of over 65km (40 miles). The mountain-bike trail starting and ending at Scharitzkeh-alm leads past waterfalls and gorges and offers rewarding views of the Jenner and Watzmann mountains.

A particularly popular cycling excursion is the scenic route leading to Salzburg, some 25km from Berchtesgaden. Many cyclists also follow the Mozart cycling trail (Mozartradweg) that links the places connected to that musical genius from Chiemgau via the Berchtesgadener Land to Salzburg. For detailed information and descriptions visit [www.berchtesgadener-land.info](http://www.berchtesgadener-land.info)
| Hut-hopping through Berchtesgaden National Park | Oh, to stand on the mountaintop when the sun rises, enveloped in the world of crags and peaks of the National Park! To be alone in the heart of the wilderness, overwhelmed by the play of colours in the melting sunlight as the day draws to its close and the marmot whistles “goodnight” to the stag…

Hut-hopping in the Berchtesgadener Land is one of the most memorable experiences one can have. A four-day tour can lead an experienced hiker to some of the most beautiful spots in the National Park. Starting at the Jenner cable-car’s base station, a six-hour hike leads up to Gotzenalm pasture at 1685m. A short excursion from here is well-worth it: Feuerpalfen offers a breathtaking view down onto Königssee and to over to Mt Watzmann’s impressive east face. The next day, the trail leads on to Wasseralm (1423m) which is reached in about five hours. The greatest challenge on this stretch is passing through a scree field before overnighting at a refuge hut. The third day finds the hiker at Halsköpf with a grandiose vista onto Königssee. The mountain lakes Grünsee and Schwarzsee are pleasant stops en route to Kärlingerhaus (1633 m) which is reached in a total of about five hours. Some like to take a dip in the waters of legendary Funtensee before scrambling up another 1.5 hours to Viehkogel affording a glorious view of the extensive Steinerne Meer area. On the fourth day a mere three hour hike is needed to descend via 36 switchbacks through Saugasse to the peninsula of St Bartholomew to take the half-hour boat trip back to the starting point. |
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<td>Under Mount Watzmann’s gaze: A climbing paradise for all</td>
<td>The most famous rock cliff in the Alps is undoubtedly the Watzmann’s east face that has claimed numerous lives ever since its first ascent in 1881 and should thus be climbed by professionals only. A perfect place for beginners to learn rock-climbing is the Baueiskar at about 1600m (5600ft). Weekend climbing lessons are offered here for families and children from 10 and up, including an overnight stay at the Blaueis mountain hut. Experienced climbers, on the other hand, are more attracted to the Berchtesgadener Hochthronsteig, an ascent leading up the 400m high east face of the mountain and secured with cables and footholds. The via ferrata in Piding, leading up through the northern outcrops of Mt Hochstaufen, requires excellent condition and knowhow. Here many climbers use a mountain bike to reach the trailhead near Urwies.</td>
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### Facts & Figures

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<th>Berchtesgadener Land</th>
<th>Located in the south-eastern tip of Germany, Berchtesgaden Land is both unique and diverse. It ranges from gentle rolling hills in the Rupertiwinkl region to Berchtesgaden National Park boasting Germany’s second-highest mountain, the Watzmann at 2,713m (around 10,000ft). Berchtesgaden Land’s particular attractiveness is due to its outstanding natural beauty on the one hand, as well the salt cure spa history and world-class cultural palette of Bad Reichenhall on the other.</th>
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<td>Accessibility</td>
<td>Located 25 km from Salzburg airport, 190 km from Munich airport, it is also easily reached by train on the Munich – Berchtesgaden line or by car via the A8 Munich – Salzburg Autobahn (exit Bad Reichenhall / Berchtesgaden).</td>
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<td>Accommodation and Food</td>
<td>33,000 guest beds; 95 hotels, 352 inns, 9 hotels with spa facilities, 835 B&amp;Bs, 1849 self-catering apartments, 8 campgrounds, 16 sanatoriums / spa clinics / clinics</td>
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| Cable-cars | In operation in summer:  
- Jennerbahn (Königssee, [www.jenner.de](http://www.jenner.de))  
- Predigtstuhlbahn (Bad Reichenhall, world’s oldest large cabin cable-car from 1928 [www.predigtstuhl-hotel.de](http://www.predigtstuhl-hotel.de))  
- Obersalzbergbahn (Berchtesgaden, [www.fun-ski-obersalzberg.de/s_bahn/](http://www.fun-ski-obersalzberg.de/s_bahn/))  
- Hochschwarzeckbahn (Ramsau, [www.hochschwarzeck-info.de](http://www.hochschwarzeck-info.de)) |
| Swimming Lakes | Abtsdorfer See, Höglwörther See, Aschauer Weiher, Thumsee |
| Hiking | There are 740 km of well signposted summer trails to choose from, as well as guided mountain hikes and excursions to alpine pastures some of which are offered by Berchtesgaden National Park. |
| Cycling | The region’s cycling trail network is roughly 500 km in length. There are plenty of great tours and excursions for cyclists, amateurs and mountain bike freaks. |
| Other Outdoor Activities | Mountainclimbing, climbing classes, high rope course, Segway excursions, canyoning, white-water rafting, kayaking, tandem paragliding, archery, tennis, golf (9-hole golf course at Obersalzberg), summer sledding, ice-curling, skating, rowing, horse-drawn carriage rides, etc. |
| Music | Bad Reichenhall’s Philharmonic Orchestra and authentic Bavarian folk music events |
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